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The Limits of Patience

The Israelis began with a lot of bluster in the case of Jonathan Jay Pollard, the civilian U.S. Navy counterterrorist analyst charged with spying for Israel. For a week, they stonewalled.

Their weekend apology, although hailed by Secretary of State George P. Shultz as "excellent," sounded halfhearted. The government said it was sorry for the espionage "to the extent it did take place." The statement said nothing about returning the documents or making available the two spy-handlers who fled the country after Pollard was nabbed seeking asylum in the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Subsequently, the Israeli government decided to make some concessions, agreeing to let American officials question the two handlers and give back the documents.

The American people have a long history of admiration for and forbearance with Israel. We support its government to the tune of \$14 million a day. We share intelligence. We have our ships overhauled in its harbor. We buy some of its weapons; we let them battle-test some of ours.

Even when the Israelis bombed our spy-ship, the USS Liberty, we forgave them. The Israelis have every reason to think they can do no wrong.

Nothing diminishes the respect and fear of American politicians for the power of the Jewish vote.

Anyone looking for confirmation of that political reality had only to listen to what was said over the weekend. President Reagan, a politician who breaks many of the rules, took note in his Saturday radio broadcast of the rash of spooks discovered lately. He took the upbeat view that we have simply become more adept at catching them and went on and on about the KGB and the sophisticated techniques it uses to "steal our secrets and technology."

He did not mention Israel.

On the Sunday television show "This Week With David Brinkley," Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) thundered about espionage that "we should start pulling out fingernails to make clear it's not funny, not worth it and it won't be tolerated."

But about Israel, he purred, "They've offered us a very handsome apology. We can straighten this out in no time."

Apparently the Israelis became convinced that Americans would not take kindly to having their tax dollars used to finance being spied on. And their friends in the American Jewish

community must have prevailed upon them to take seriously the perils of the specter of "dual loyalty" on the part of American Jews.

No talk of a possible curtailment of aid to Israel was heard in the aftermath of this most shocking of the spy cases. To some Americans it was as if England, or Canada, had been involved. When Ghana, another friendly country, was caught passing our secrets, there were immediate cries for revenge on the fiscal front.

The Israelis have promised to conduct their own investigation of the Pollard affair. They do well at investigating their own crimes. But they are dependent on us, and we are in a position to set some rules and conditions. Treason is a grave matter, and we should not be put off by their rationalization that Pollard volunteered to spy, that he fed them only what related to their security or what we should have given them anyway. Or, that we spy on them, too.

Can you imagine us buying any of that if a U.S. citizen were found spying for Nicaragua?

The other recent cases tell more about our counterspy operations. Larry Wu-Tai Chin, a Chinese American accused of selling secrets to Peking for 30 years, worked for the Central Intelligence Agency from 1952 until 1981 and was a consultant to the CIA at the time of his arrest. Apparently, none of our spies in China noticed how Chin was lionized during his many trips to that country.

Ronald William Pelton, who was close to destitute, had severe housing problems. He lived in a squalid trailer, despite a well-paid job with the super-secret National Security Agency. He tried to build a new house, but after two years of construction, it was not finished. He allegedly began to sell secrets to the Soviets.

At least Pelton and Chin were charged with spying for America's adversaries. Israel, on the other hand, is our friend—and our client.

We treat Israel differently from any other country in the world. We do it, gladly for the most part, but now we feel she has taken advantage of us. Unless she comes clean, she may find there are limits to U.S. patience. If she has to reveal that we spied on her as well, we have to be ready to handle that, too.

It's no longer the mark of a paranoid to say there are spies everywhere.

Obviously, there are.